

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 OFA-01 DLOS-04 AGR-05 EB-07

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AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, IC, UK

SUBJECT: UK/ICELAND FISHERIES DISPUTE

REF: (A) LONDON 18032; (B) LONDON 17899

1. THE DEADLINE SET BY BRITISH TRAWLER SKIPPERS OVER THE WEEKEND DEMANDING THAT HMG SEND IN THE NAVY BY NOON NOVEMBER 24, PASSED WITHOUT HMG TAKING REQUESTED ACTION. GOVERNMENT DID SEND AIRCRAFT ON PATROL OVER FISHING AREAS AND TUGS CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN AREA ON INTERPOSITION MISSION. GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT A MEETING WOULD BE HELD IN THE EARLY EVENING OF NOVEMBER 24 CHAIRED BY FRED PEART, MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (MAFF), ATTENDED BY ROY
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HATTERSLEY, MINISTER OF STATE, FCO; WILLIAM RODGERS,

MINISTER OF STATE, MOD; HUGH BROWN FROM THE SCOTTISH OFFICE; TED BISHOP, PEART'S DEPUTY IN MAFF; AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TRAWLER OWNERS, OFFICERS, AND CREWS. VERY SHORT STATEMENT ISSUED AFTER MEETING SAID GOVERNMENT AGREED TO ANNOUNCE ITS DECISION ON WHAT TYPE OF PROTECTION TO PROVIDE THE TRAWLERS BY NOON NOVEMBER 25. THERE HAVE BEEN PRESS REPORTS THAT ABOUT HALF THE BRITISH TRAWLER FLEET OFF ICELAND -- 20 OF ABOUT 40 TRAWLERS IN ICELANDIC WATERS -- WERE STEAMING AWAY FROM THE COD FISHING GROUNDS IN SPITE OF GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST THAT TRAWLERS REMAIN IN ICELANDIC WATERS AND CONTINUE FISHING.

2. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS NOVEMBER 25, RODGERS STATED HMG IS ANXIOUS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION WITHOUT PROVOCATION AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO PREMATURE ESCALATION OF WHAT ARE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES. THE OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN FOR DEFENSE ASKED RODGERS IF HE WOULD AT LEAST GIVE AN ASSURANCE THAT NAVY VESSELS WILL BE MOVED TO THE AREA SO THAT THEY ARE IN THE VICINITY OF THE 200-MILE LIMIT AND READY TO ASSIST QUICKLY, IF NECESSARY. (PRESS HAS REPORTED UK NAVAL VESSELS INVOLVED IN NATO EXERCISE OFF NORWAY COULD BE MOVED INTO AREA WITHIN 24 HOURS.) RODGERS RESPONDED THAT HMG IS TAKING ALL NECESSARY MEASURES TO ENABLE IT TO PROVIDE FURTHER PROTECTION ON TIME SHOULD IT BE NECESSARY. THIS STATEMENT HAS LED TO SPECULATION THAT THE CABINET WILL DECIDE TODAY TO SEND A ROYAL NAVY FRIGATE INTO ICELANDIC WATERS BUT THAT IT WOULD REMAIN OUTSIDE THE FISHING ZONE.

RICHARDSON

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